

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An electronic merchandise distribution apparatus applied to a system including a plurality of terminals capable of receiving electronic program guide (EPG) and contents, and a plurality of access providers disposed between the electronic merchandise distribution apparatus and at least part of the plurality of terminals and capable of transmitting the EPG and contents to be distributed from the electronic merchandise distribution apparatus to the part of the plurality of the terminals which make contents viewing requests, the apparatus comprising:

an information management unit which acquires at least one of viewing information, preference information, and retrieval information of a user who uses one of the plurality of terminals; and

a distribution management unit which stores non-real-time contents compressed by a CODEC, in an access provider corresponding to one of the plurality of terminals used by the user, based on the acquired at least one of the viewing information, preference information, and retrieval information of the user, prior to receiving the contents viewing request from the user.

2. The electronic merchandise distribution apparatus according to claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of access providers includes:

a first distribution server capable of storing the contents sent from the electronic merchandise distribution apparatus and distributing the stored contents, and

5 a plurality of second distribution servers capable of storing the contents sent from the first distribution server and distributing the stored contents to one of the plurality of terminals used by the user when receiving the contents viewing request
10 from the user.

3. The electronic merchandise distribution apparatus according to claim 1, wherein:

the information management unit includes a viewing information collection and management unit which
15 collects and manages viewing information of contents viewed by viewers at each terminal, and

the distribution management unit distributes EPG or contents on which the viewing information is reflected.

20 4. The electronic merchandise distribution apparatus according to claim 1, wherein:

the information management unit includes a preference information management unit which acquires and manages preference information of contents favored
25 by viewers at each terminal, and

the distribution management unit distributes EPG or contents on which the preference information is

reflected.

5 5. The electronic merchandise distribution apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising an electronic merchandise guide unit which generates and distributes a screen displaying electronic merchandise guide information capable of being customized at each terminal.

10 6. The electronic merchandise distribution apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the electronic merchandise guide unit is capable of generating and distributing a screen on which contents obtained from a public network are reflected.

15 7. The electronic merchandise distribution apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising a retrieval unit which provides a contents retrieval result on which the viewing information depending on a contents retrieval request from a terminal is reflected.

20 8. The electronic merchandise distribution apparatus according to claim 4, further comprising a retrieval unit which provides a contents retrieval result on which the preference information depending on a contents retrieval request from a terminal is reflected.

25 9. An electronic merchandise receiving terminal capable of receiving electronic program guide (EPG) and contents distributed from an electronic merchandise

distribution apparatus by way of an access provider,
the terminal comprising:

a first processing unit which requests contents
viewing to the access provider; and

5 a second processing unit which receives contents
stored in the access provider by the electronic
merchandise distribution apparatus prior to the
contents viewing request, from the access provider when
requesting the contents viewing.

10 10. An electronic merchandise distribution method
applied to a system including a plurality of terminals
capable of receiving electronic program guide (EPG)
and contents, an electronic merchandise distribution
apparatus capable of distributing the EPG and contents,
15 and a plurality of access providers disposed between
the electronic merchandise distribution apparatus and
at least part of the plurality of terminals, and
capable of transmitting the EPG and contents
distributed from the electronic merchandise
20 distribution apparatus to the part of the plurality of
terminals which make contents viewing requests, the
method comprising:

acquiring, by the merchandise distribution
apparatus, at least one of viewing information,
25 preference information, and retrieval information of a
user who uses one of the plurality of terminals; and
storing, by the merchandise distribution

apparatus, non-real-time contents compressed by a CODEC, in an access provider corresponding to one of the terminals used by the user, based on the acquired at least one of the viewing information, preference
5 information, and retrieval information of the user, prior to receiving the contents viewing request from the user.

11. The electronic merchandise distribution method according to claim 10, further comprising:

10 storing the contents sent from the electronic merchandise distribution apparatus in a first distribution server in each of the plurality of access providers and distributing the stored contents, and

15 storing the contents sent from the first distribution server in a plurality of second distribution servers in each of the plurality of access providers and distributing the stored contents to one of the plurality of terminals used by the user when receiving the contents viewing request from the user.

20 12. The electronic merchandise distribution method according to claim 10, further comprising:

collecting and managing, by the electronic merchandise distribution apparatus, viewing information of contents viewed by viewers at each terminal to
25 distribute EPG or contents on which the viewing information is reflected.

13. The electronic merchandise distribution method

according to claim 10, further comprising:

acquiring and managing, by the electronic merchandise distribution apparatus, preference information of contents favored by viewers at each terminal to distribute EPG or contents on which the preference information is reflected.

14. The electronic merchandise distribution method according to claim 10, further comprising:

generating and distributing, by the electronic merchandise distribution apparatus, a screen displaying electronic merchandise guide information capable of being customized at each terminal.

15. The electronic merchandise distribution method according to claim 14, further comprising:

generating and distributing, by the electronic merchandise distribution apparatus, a screen on which contents obtained from a public network are reflected.

16. The electronic merchandise distribution method according to claim 12, further comprising:

providing, by the electronic merchandise distribution apparatus, a contents retrieval result on which the viewing information depending on a contents retrieval request from a terminal is reflected.

17. The electronic merchandise distribution method according to claim 13, further comprising:

providing, by the electronic merchandise distribution apparatus, a contents retrieval result on

which the preference information depending on a contents retrieval request from a terminal is reflected.

18. An electronic merchandise distribution method
5 applied to a system which allows a supervising organization to distribute contents purchased from a contents provider to each of a plurality of electronic merchandise distribution apparatuses, and each
10 electronic merchandise distribution apparatus to distribute the contents received from the supervising organization to electronic merchandise receiving terminals through a corresponding system operator, the method comprising:

deducting, by the system operator, own commission
15 of the system operator from a contents usage fee collected from the electronic merchandise receiving terminals, and paying the remainder to a corresponding electronic merchandise distribution apparatus;

deducting, by the electronic merchandise
20 distribution apparatus, own commission of the electronic merchandise distribution apparatus from an amount paid from the system operator, and paying a remainder to the supervising organization; and

paying, by the supervising organization, an amount
25 obtained from the electronic merchandise distribution apparatus to the contents provider as a royalty.

19. An electronic merchandise distribution method

applied to a system which allows a first electronic merchandise distribution apparatus to distribute contents purchased from a contents provider to a second electronic merchandise distribution apparatus, and the
5 second electronic merchandise distribution apparatus to distribute the contents received from the first electronic merchandise distribution apparatus to electronic merchandise receiving terminals through a system operator, the method comprising:

10 deducting, by the system operator, own commission of the system operator from a contents usage fee collected from the electronic merchandise receiving terminals, and paying a remainder to the second electronic merchandise distribution apparatus;

15 deducting, by the second electronic merchandise distribution apparatus, own commission of the second electronic merchandise distribution apparatus from an amount paid from the system operator, and paying a remainder to the first electronic merchandise
20 distribution apparatus; and

deducting, by the first electronic merchandise distribution apparatus, own commission of the first electronic merchandise distribution apparatus from an amount paid from the second electronic merchandise
25 distribution apparatus, and paying a remainder to the contents provider as a royalty.